

Contributions.

LOVE.

A. B. GNAGEY.

Love never faileth; but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall be done away; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall be done away. I Corinthians 13:8.

Love is immortal, for it shall never fail. It is the strongest force contained in the soul. It is the strongest sustaining power under all circumstances. In case of great trials and sorrows, and under every burden, love is the only power that can appropriate the upholding promises of God. Love is also a great and strong resisting power. We have not only burdens in this life, but we have enemies, and a soul without love can not deal properly with an enemy. If a soul is pre-occupied with love, temptations, no matter what their nature may be, will be entirely without power. It is impossible for any one to draw us astray unless in some way or other our affections are enlisted, and if we center our love on God we are immovable. We stand as firm as a house whose foundation is built upon a rock. Love builds around our souls a rampart against which the attacks of the enemy strike but to rebound. There is nothing in the moral world so aggressive as love. It is a fire that encircles with its wide spreading flames everything within its sphere. There is nothing that man can stand before with greater fear than love. A heart that is utterly closed with bolted doors against selfishness or sternness or wrath will open to generosity or kindness or love. It is said that all the energies of the soul grow under the influence of love as nature under the beautiful sky of spring. It is the very atmosphere of an undying life. It "never faileth." It is the gravitation of the moral realm. By love Christ binds all his people into one. It is a principle of social unity which binds the masses and the classes, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, all sorts and conditions of men. It "never faileth," but it is the only bond that does not. It is a source of spiritual happiness and is great joy. It casts out from the heart all that which is contrary to true happiness, and creates all the elements of spiritual joy. "Love sets all the strings of life's lyre to music, brings the soul like a wondering orb from chaos, links it to its own center, and fills it with the light and life of heaven." If love does all this, Paul could well say, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

For any one to say that this is romantic and unpractical, as is sometimes claimed, is to condemn the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The object of the Incarnation and coming into the world of our blessed Lord was to make us at once better men and women. Christ taught the law of loving enemies in his own life. It may be said that love is a tree which may be known by its fruit. The fruits of love are purity, truth, justice, mercy, honor, liberty, patience, meekness, and sympathy. The test of love is by no means mere fancy or fondness, but the test is in the amount of trouble you are willing to take and the sacrifice you are prepared to make for the person you claim to love.

I quote the following from H. Percy Smith: "Instead of the precept, 'Love your enemies,' being a mere lovely theory, it is to the last degree practicable, because the principle which underlies the whole matter is simply this, and it admits of very wide application indeed, whenever a person finds himself in a position in any way whatever antagonistic to that of another, then there arises at once a special call and reminder to be just, patient, scrupulously fair, to do as one would be done by; for who can fail to see that, when something draws towards one and not towards another, the two are judged by totally different standards. A weak leniency, a caricature of charity, sees nothing wrong in one, while in another faults are magnified and perhaps nothing is right."

Natural man is too selfish to share his blessings with the poor. He can not love his neighbor as himself and much less his enemy. The Scriptures repeatedly declare the inability of the natural man to do this. Up to the time of Christ such charity was unknown. Disinterested kindness rarely existed outside the circle of kinship, and to very few of the poor within that circle. A great many people died for their country, and for great leaders, but none died for the poor, in the sense of Christ's regard for them. Robert Hall says: "You might have traversed the whole Roman Empire from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and not found one charitable asylum for the sick and unfortunate." Hume states that the aged and infirm were often left in destitute places to starve, and the common custom of society was to put to death as many children as were not wanted, either because of invalids or too many to support. This same thing is true of nations to-day ignorant of Revelation. Class distinction prove the width and depth of social selfishness. The royal, the rich, and the educated wed and perpetuate their own kind. To conquer in this struggle soulless corporations are

formed to tread the weak down. This is all wrong. Nature changes at the very moment when God lifts animal man to the plane of intelligence and innocence. These are the marks of God's Image. Spiritual man is the life of God in the human body. Christ identifies himself with the poor. To get nearest to Christ is to get nearest to the poor, and to do this love is essential. The true Gospel teaching is, the greatest good to the poor.

The reason the Christianity of Love survives all is because it is the fittest to overcome the natural heart. It is the very life of God in man. It satisfies a person while here an earth, and it gives him hopes and aspirations which will be fully met in Heaven. On earth we drink from this fountain of love through faith and hope, but as great as faith and hope are love is greater, because love outlives them all, and brings man at last to the very fountain of life in heaven itself.

One of the most discouraging features about present Protestantism is its *lack of love*. Some places it is getting almost as cold and hard as Romanism. It is a sort of cold-storage Christianity. Sailors know when they are approaching an iceberg by the lowering of the temperature. There is such a feeling as this in society about churches, their very appearance is chilling. It may seem wrong to some to say these things, but it is only too true. Great heartsore struggling humanity seems to think of churches as the last place for sympathy and love. It asks for bread and is given a stone.

Some of you who think these statements too strong, imagine a ragged penniless man entering one of our fashionable churches in one of our large cities.

The saloon is one of the great causes of misery, but back of the saloon are other causes. One is the wretched condition of the home which drives many men to the social attractions of the saloon, and back of the home is the church, which has ceased to a great extent to make the home what it ought to be. It seems what is lacking is want of true love. As soon as the home, the church, and the race will rule by love, they will conquer the world from sin.

PASTORAL VISITING.

JOHN A. MILLER.

This is a subject that deserves the most careful consideration of every pastor having charge of God's people. It is most pleasant to visit the homes of the working members of the congregation, upon whom the pastor can always depend. But it is not so pleasant to the minister to go after those apparently lost sheep of the fold, who neglect attendance upon the outward